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ABSTRACT

The consistency of content areas was assessed for six college health textbooks published between 1980 and 1987. Texts were analyzed to determine coverage of ten selected content areas: (1) motor vehicle accidents; (2) teenage pregnancy; (3) suicide and homicide; (4) alcohol and drug misuse; (5) smoking; (6) nutrition; (7) exercise and fitness; (8) stress; (9) mental illness; and (10) sexually transmitted diseases. Areas were identified from the Surgeon General's report (1979) outlining the national health goals for the decade. Also evaluated were quantifiable/textbook characteristics including: textbook page space comprising text; photographs, tables/charts/illustrations (T/C/I); and readability. A mean of 40.34% of the textbook space was devoted to the ten priority content areas. Three goal areas (motor vehicle accidents, mental illness, and suicide/homicide) were not addressed in every textbook. Alcohol and drug misuse accounted for the greatest amount of content space. Text comprised 47% of textbook space and readability from grades 12.04 to 14.55. Results suggest increased emphasis on national health goals in health program planning and research priorities and in college health textbooks. Recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, publishers, and authors are offered. (Includes eight references) (Author/PT)

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DESIGNATIONS ANALYSIS OF SELECTED COLLEGE HEALTH TEXTBOOKS FOR CONTENT RELATING TO HEALTHY PEOPLE

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DESIGNATIONS ANALYSIS OF SELECTED COLLEGE HEALTH TEXTBOOKS FOR CONTENT RELATING TO HEALTHY PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

Six selected college health textbooks published between 1980 and 1987 were analyzed to determine the extent of coverage of 10 selected content areas from Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, 1979, which outlined the national health goals for the decade ending in 1990. Content areas assessed were: 1) motor vehicle accidents, 2) alcohol and drug misuse, 3) teenage pregnancy, 4) sexually transmitted diseases, 5) mental illness, 6) suicide and homicide, 7) smoking, 8) nutrition, 9) exercise and fitness, and 10) stress.

Data collection instruments were created for tabulation of textbook page space comprising text, photographs, tables/charts/illustrations (T/C/I), and other. Readability grade level was determined using the SMOG formula. Assessments were made of content areas found in college health textbooks in addition to the 10 selected content areas.

A mean of 40.34% of the textbook space was devoted to the 10 selected content areas of Healthy People. Three of the 10 selected content areas (motor vehicle accidents, mental illness, and suicide and homicide) were not addressed in every textbook. Alcohol and drug misuse accounted for the greatest amount of content space (10.47%). Text comprised the greatest amount (47%) of textbook space. Thirty-one percent to 57% of the textbook characteristic space addressed the 10 selected content

areas. Mean SMOG readability grade level of the textbooks ranged from grade 12.04 to 14.55.

Recommendations resulting from the findings relate to the need for consistent health-related terminology, continued emphasis on national health goals as a foundation for health program planning and research priorities, and the development of college health textbooks which reflect the national health goals.

INTRODUCTION

The creation of Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, 1979, spurred a national effort to unite actions and practices of groups and individuals toward consistent goals of improved health for the decade ending in 1990. Promoting Health/Preventing Disease: Objectives for the Nation (U.S. DHHS, 1980) provided a specific framework for achieving the goals. Public health agencies worked to improve services and track the occurrence of priority health issues. Many states prepared statewide health status reviews and installed long range strategic planning systems. Educators implemented programs to address the national objectives. Since many of the national goals and objectives can be addressed through education, it is important to look at materials used to teach about health. Recognizing that textbooks are common sources of information for college health courses, assessment of the consistency of content areas in college health textbooks with the national goals and objectives is important for the college population.

METHOD

The technique used in this study of college health textbooks was a designations analysis. A term promoted by Janis (1965), designations analysis is a technique used to describe printed material by providing the frequency at which specific objects (persons, things, groups, or concepts) are referred. Designations analysis is also called subject-matter analysis. Analysis procedures are tabulations of the occurrence of

characteristics to quantify the subject-matter of printed material. A designations analysis is comprised of two components, a subject-matter category and a quantifiable characteristic.

Ten subject-matter categories and nine quantifiable characteristics were chosen to describe the college health textbooks. However, different terms were used to identify these two components of designations analysis in this study. The term, content areas, applied to the subject-matter categories and textbook characteristics was used rather than quantifiable characteristics.

Tabulation sheets were constructed to record the textbook characteristics. The data collection chart was used to tabulate every textbook page. Two data compilation sheets were used to group the characteristics by content area, and for assessing textbook totals.

Content Areas

The content areas selected for analysis were drawn from Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. This federal document established broad health goals for Americans to be achieved by the year 1990. Aimed at reduction in deaths or sick days, these health goals were arranged as they applied to five age groups. The age groups were: (a) infants, below age 1; (b) children, age 1 to 14; (c) adolescents and young adults, 15 to 24; (d) adults, age 25 to 64; and (e) older adults, 65 and over.

In addition to the broad health goals, subgoals were indicated as priority areas of focus for each age group. The goal for infants was 35% fewer deaths with subgoals targeting low birth weight and birth defects. For children, the goal was 20% fewer deaths with subgoals targeting growth and development and injuries. The goal for adolescents and young adults was set at 20% fewer deaths with subgoals targeting reducing motor vehicle accidents, and alcohol and drug misuse. The adult goal was 25% reduction in deaths with subgoals targeting heart attack, stroke, and cancer. For older adults, 20% fewer sick days was established as the goal, with subgoals targeting functional independence and influenza/pnemonia (U.S. DHEW, 1979).

Since the age of the typical student of college health courses lies within the age group, adolescents and young adults, ages 15 and 24, this age group was selected to be the primary focus on health issues in college health textbooks. As stated in Healthy People (U.S. DHEW, 1979) the goal was "to improve the health and the health habits of adolescents and young adults, and, by 1990, to reduce deaths among people ages 15 to 24 by at least 20 percent, to fewer than 93 per 100,000" (p. 43). The subgoals for this age group were to reduce fatal motor vehicle accidents and alcohol and drug misuse. In addition to the goal and subgoals, specific health issues were noted in the Surgeon General's report (U.S. DHEW, 1979) as important problems creating "prominent threats to the physical and mental health of young people" (p. 47). These important problems were teenage

pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, mental illness, and suicide and homicide. Therefore, combining the health issues of the adolescent and young adult goals, subgoals, and important problems, six content areas of health became the basis for content area components of this study. Those six content areas were: (a) motor vehicle accidents, (b) alcohol and drug misuse, (c) teenage pregnancy, (d) sexually transmitted diseases, (e) mental illness, and (f) suicide and homicide.

As reported in A Midcourse Review (U.S. DHHS, 1986) the Surgeon General's report identified fifteen priority health problems as keys to the achievement of the overall health goals. McGinnis (1984) indicated that the 15 priority areas were grouped into three strategies:

1. preventive health services, to be provided by physicians, hospitals, and other health care providers;

2. health protection, to be addressed by government, industry and other organizations to reduce health hazards in the environment; and

3. health promotion, which applied to programs for educating the public about risks involved in health abuses and sought to increase public commitment to sensible lifestyles that add years to life.

Preventive health services priority areas were: (a) high blood pressure control, (b) family planning, (c) pregnancy and infant care, (d) immunizations, and (e) sexually transmitted diseases services. Health protection areas were: (a) toxic agent control, (b) occupational safety and health, (c)

accidental injury control, (d) fluoridation of community water supplies, and (e) infectious agent control. Health promotion priorities were: (a) smoking cessation, (b) reducing misuse of alcohol and drugs, (c) improved nutrition, (d) exercise and fitness, and (e) stress control.

Since the five health promotion priority areas were specified to educating the public, these five areas were incorporated as content areas for the designations analysis of the college health textbooks. Thus, the six content areas of health, stated in the goals, subgoals, and important problems for adolescents and young adults, plus the five priority areas of health promotion were selected from the Surgeon General's report for the designations analysis of college health textbooks published between 1980 and 1987. Combining these content areas, and recognizing the overlap of the content area, alcohol and drug misuse, the total number of content areas selected for analysis was ten. Those ten content areas were: (a) motor vehicle accidents, (b) alcohol and drug misuse, (c) teenage pregnancy, (d) sexually transmitted diseases, (e) mental illness, (f) suicide and homicide, (g) smoking, (h) nutrition, (i) exercise and fitness, and (j) stress.

Textbook Characteristics

From a field study of college health textbooks, completed in the spring of 1987, and after reviewing current textbook evaluation forms, nine textbook characteristics were combined to depict the traits of textbooks. These textbook characteristics were selected to illustrate the contents and proportions of

characteristics of the textbooks. The nine textbook characteristics selected for quantifying the content areas of selected college health textbooks published between 1980 and 1987 were: (a) number of pages in textbook, (b) number of pages of text, (c) proportion of text space, (d) frequency of photographs, (e) proportion of photograph space, (f) frequency of tables/charts/illustrations (T/C/I), (g) proportion of T/C/I space, (h) proportion of other space, (i) SMOG readability grade level.

RESULTS

The total textbook space of the six college health textbooks (excluding indexes, introductions, prefaces, and table of contents) ranged from 421.57 to 541.35 pages. Of the total textbook space, a mean of 40.34% addressed the 10 selected content areas. Seven of the 10 content areas were addressed in every textbook. Motor vehicle accidents, mental illness and suicide and homicide were not addressed in all textbooks. Alcohol and drug misuse which was represented most by all textbooks, comprised a mean of 10.47% of the textbook space. Five content areas (alcohol and drug misuse, smoking, nutrition, exercise and fitness, and stress) were presented as entire chapters in the textbooks. The remaining five content areas were presented as chapters, sections of chapters, or not at all.

Of the textbook characteristics, text comprised the greatest amount (48%) of the textbook space, followed by other (e.g. lists of terms and definitions, discussion questions, self-guided activities) (29%), T/C/I (12.6%), and photographs

(11.1%). Thirty-one percent to 57% of the textbook characteristic space addressed the 10 selected content areas of Healthy People. Six of the 10 selected content areas (alcohol and drug misuse, teenage pregnancy, smoking, nutrition, exercise and fitness, and stress) were addressed by all four textbook characteristics. Mean SMOG readability grade level of the textbooks ranged from grade 12.04 to 14.55.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations emanating from this study have implications for the following categories: (a) authors and publishers of college health textbooks, (b) health educators of college health courses, (c) developers of the year 2000 national health objectives, and (d) the federal government.

College health textbook authors and publishers

College health textbook authors and publishers should:

1. be aware of the national goals set for Americans in Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, 1979, and the objectives for the year 2000. The content of college health textbooks should be congruent with the national goals and objectives, since the college age population is within an age group identified in the goals.

2. incorporate a section of the textbook which would focus on priority health issues specific to the college age group.

3. ensure that the leading causes of morbidity and mortality (motor vehicle accidents, suicide, and homicide) for the college age group are addressed in college health textbooks.

4. review and monitor the readability grade level of college health textbooks.

5. produce textbooks which:

a. exhibit consistent formats or styles;

b. provide easily identified headings and categories in every chapter or unit, and precise structure and placement of instructional strategies within chapters or units;

c. place those intructional strategies which consume large amounts of space, such as checklists and scales for self-assessment, at the end of chapters, in appendices, or in a separate "workbook";

d. exhibit accurate and clear descriptions and definitions of terms in a separate reference section of the textbook;

e. recommend to college health course instructors uses of instructional strategies for incorporation in classroom instruction.

6. reassess the purpose of textbook use in college health courses. The purpose for which a textbook is used should influence the manner in which textbooks present information on health. College health textbooks used as reference materials should be dominated by text and T/C/I. College health textbooks used as a source for course organization and as the initiative for course instruction should provide an activity-filled workbook format.

Health Educators of College Health Courses

Health educators of college health courses should:

1. be aware of the national health goals and apply these as appropriate to college health courses.

2. ensure that current and forthcoming priority health issues identified by the Surgeon General for adolescents and young adults are addressed in college health courses.

3. look for national health goal issues in college health textbooks, and purchase and use only those textbooks congruent with national goals.

4. establish accurate and consistent definitions of health terms (i.e. health promotion, health prevention, and all individual content areas).

5. get involved in the development of national health goals in these ways:

   a. demand consistent and accurate use of health terms in the national goals;

   b. develop methods of addressing the health problems identified by the national health goals;

   c. create ways to implement actions toward accomplishing the goals.

6. support future efforts for qualitative evaluation of college health textbooks.

Developers of the Year 2000 National Health Objectives

The developers of the national health goals should:

1. ensure that accurate terms are used consistently and precisely throughout the development, implementation, and

revision of the goals. Strict adherence to accurate term usage should be emphasized to encourage agreement, uniformity, and clarity in health issues.

2. look to health specialists, health educators, and professional health associations for:

a. definitions of health terms;

b. suggestions as to how the national health goals can be implemented in the college setting.

Federal Government

The federal government should:

1. seek to publicize statistics on morbidity and mortality rates of Americans in many different sources so that all people would find the information available and accessible.

2. continue to assign priorities to leading morbidity and mortality issues, and set national health goals corresponding to these issues to provide the impetus for planning and implementing actions toward improved health.

3. encourage periodic state and local health department progress reports indicating the actions of implementations and the impact of the national health goals on the health of Americans.

4. support consistent health education programs upon which health priorities can be dealt. Strong, consistent health education programs must provide the basis upon which priorities can be highlighted.

5. recognize the population of college students who take personal health courses. Realizing these people will be the

adults and leaders of our society in the future, the federal government should support health education courses at the college level and make provisions for consistency of textbooks and other educational materials with the national goals.

Improving the health of the nation's students in higher education may also have a ripple effect to others in the population. Davis Chervin, Conant Sloane, Gordon, and Gold (1986) noted that in addition to becoming parents, many of these individuals will assume leadership positions in business, government, education, industry, medicine, and law. As their sphere of influence broadens, the improved health status and healthful orientation of students has the potential for a significant impact on others.

Toward the Year 2000

The second decade plan for improved health of Americans is presented in the year 2000 objectives. A draft document was released for public review and comment (Public Health Service, 1989). The final document will be completed in the summer of 1990. It is important for health educators to become familiar with these objectives and apply them as appropriate to their setting. Health textbook authors and publishers should ensure that textbooks reflect national goals and objectives. Special attention should be given toward the health of the college-age population. Consideration for use of textbooks in college health courses should address the inclusion of priority health issues identified in the year 2000 objectives. Guyton, Corbin, Zimmer, O'Donnell, Davis Chervin, Conant Sloane, and Dyer

Chamberlain (1989) indicated that the organization and delivery of health services on college campuses includes a "unified, multidimensional, community-wide approach to prevention, education, diagnosis, and treatment" (p. 12). Educating college students through textbook use in health education courses would represent one segment of a comprehensive health program.

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